

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /079 W

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R 212000Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7789

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMCONSUL AUCKLAND POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SUVA 1502

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NH

SUBJECT: FRENCH POLICY CONCERNING NEW HEBRIDES

1. PAUL DIJOURD, FRENCH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR OVERSEAS TERRITORIES AND OLD FRIEND ASKED IF I COULD MEET HIM 17 AUGUST IN NADI WHERE HE WAS TRANSITING ON HIS WAY BACK TO PARIS FROM VISITS TO NEW HEBRIDES, AND FUTUNA AND WALLIS. I DID AND HAD THE BENEFIT OF AN UPDATE ON FRENCH POLICY IN THE NEW HEBRIDES, NEW CALEDONIA, AND COMORO ISLANDS AND A SPECIAL REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (EACH TO BE REPORTED SEPARATELY). THIS SUMMARIZES HIS COMMENTS ON NEW HEBRIDES.

2. HE STARTED OUT BY REMARKING HOW UNTIL RECENTLY EACH OF THE TWO CONDOMINIUM POWERS HAD TRIED WITH "CONSIDERABLE TALENT" TO GET THE OTHER OUT OF NEW HEBRIDES WHICH LED TO PETTY RIVALRIES FOR PRESTIGE AND AUTHORITY. HE ASSERTED THAT THIS IS NOW A THING OF THE PAST AND THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS JUST AS COMMITTED AND EAGER TO GET OUT
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OF THE NEW HEBRIDES AS THE UK HAS BEEN ADMITTEDLY FOR MUCH LONGER TIME. HE BELIEVES THAT THE BRITISH HAVE BEEN FINALLY CONVINCED OF THIS NEW FRENCH POLICY, BUT THERE IS STILL A PROBLEM WITH THE VANUAAKU PARTY.

3. HE FELT HIS VISIT TO PORT VILA 11 - 14 AUGUST WENT OFF WELL IN THAT HE HAD PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH THE

GOVERNMENT AND THE VANUAAKU LEADERS TO WHOM HE OUTLINED THE FOLLOWING SCENARIO FOR NB INDEPENDENCE:

(A) FRANCE NOT ONLY IS NOT SEEKING TO DELAY INDEPENDENCE BUT IS PREPARED TO ENVISAGE THE POSSIBILITY OF INDEPENDENCE COMING EVEN BEFORE THE END OF 1979.

(B) A NEW NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE SET UP COMPOSED OF EQUAL MEMBER OF MINISTERS FROM VANUAAKU PARTY AND THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO BE HEADED BY THE PRESENT CHIEF MINISTER OR BY ANY OTHER PERSONALITY THAT THE TWO PARTIES MAY SELECT JOINTLY.

(C) NH SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR INDEPENDENCE IN THE BRITISH STYLE AND NOT THAT OF THE FRENCH NAMELY THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF A CONSTITUTION AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS TO BE PUT INTO EFFECT BEFORE INDEPENDENCE SO THAT THE RULES OF THE GAME CAN BE ESTABLISHED IN ADVANCE OF THE FREE POLITICAL LIFE THE ISLAND IS TO ENJOY. HE AMPLIFIED THIS POINT BY CALLING ATTENTION TO WHAT HAPPENED TO SEVERAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHICH DID NOT HAVE THE BENEFIT OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS ALREADY IN OPERATION AT THE TIME OF INDEPENDENCE AND THEREFORE BECAME EASILY THE PREY OF UNDEMOCRATIC REGIMES AND ONE PARTY RULE.

(D) WITH THE HELP OF THE BRITISH AND FRENCH EXPERTS A CONSTITUTION CAN BE PUT TOGETHER BY JULY 1979 TO BE FOLLOWED BY REFERENDUM AND ELECTIONS IN THE FALL OF 79 AFTER WHICH INDEPENDENCE CAN COME ANY TIME THE NEW GOVERNMENT DECIDES.

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(E) FRENCH HAVE THREE DEMANDS IN CONNECTION WITH THE CONSTITUTION, FIRST THAT IT SHOULD ESTABLISH FRENCH AND ENGLISH AS THE COUNTRY'S OFFICIAL LANGUAGES, SECOND THAT THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM BE BASED MORE ON PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SO AS TO GIVE EVERY GROUP A VOICE IN PARLIAMENT, AND THIRD, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION BE DECENTRALIZED TO ALLOW EACH ISLAND TO HAVE ITS OWN LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

4. ON THE LANGUAGE QUESTION DIJOUD SAID THAT FRANCE IS SEEKING TO AVOID A "CULTURAL GENOCIDE" AGAINST THE FRENCH SPEAKING POPULATION. A PROVISION IN THE CONSTITUTION FOR THE TWO LANGUAGES IS NOT PERHAPS A GUARANTEE OF THE SURVIVAL OF FRENCH BUT WILL ASSURE THE FRENCH SPEAKING POPULATION OF A LEGAL BASIS FOR DEMANDING A FAIR SUPPORT FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS.

5. BOTH VP AND THE GOVERNMENT WERE NONCOMMITAL IN THEIR RESPONSE. THEY SAID NEITHER YES NOR NO. ACCORDING TO DIJOUD THE GOVERNMENT PROBABLY FELT THAT THE FRENCH PROPOSALS CONTAINED NOTHING BUT CONCESSIONS ON THEIR PART WHILE THE VP WAS EITHER SUSPICIOUS OF THE FRENCH

MOTIVES BEYOND SUCH OBVIOUS CONCESSIONS MADE TO THEM OR WORSE IS UNWILLING TO COMMIT ITSELF TO THE TYPE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC ARRANGEMENTS PROPOSED BY THE FRENCH.

6. A POINT TO WHICH DIJOUH RETURNED REPEATEDLY WAS HIS SUSPICION THAT THE VP HAS COME UNDER THE INFLUENCE, IF NOT CONTROL, OF YOUNG MARXIST ELEMENTS WHOSE ATTACHMENT TO WESTERN DEMOCRATIC IDEAS IS OPEN TO QUESTION. IN HIS OPINION THE VP LEADERSHIP PASSED FROM THE TRADITIONAL "NOTABLES" WHO STARTED THE PARTY TO THE AUSTRALIAN TRAINED

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PRESBYTERIANS AND IS NOW PASSING AGAIN TO A MARXIST-TRAINED NEW GENERATION. ACCORDINGLY, HE SERIOUSLY DOUBTS THAT WALTER LINI IS NOW IN COMMAND OF VP. HIS OVERALL IMPRESSION FROM HIS MEETING WITH A RATHER NUMEROUS VP DELEGATION WAS THAT THE YOUNGER MEMBERS ARE NOT RESPONDING TO TRADITIONAL VALUES AND DISCIPLINE AND ARE MANIPULATING THE PARTY TO PREVENT ITS BEING COMMITTED TO DEMOCRATIC RULE. HE HAS HAD EXPERIENCE IN MEETING AND NEGOTIATING WITH COMMUNISTS AND THOUGHT HE DETECTED IN HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH CERTAIN VP ELEMENTS, COMMUNIST BARGAINING TECHNIQUES AND RHETORIC.

7. HE STRESSED THE FACT THAT HE AND THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT ARE CONCERNED BY THE EVOLUTION WITHIN THE VP AND THAT THIS IS BECOMING A KEY FACTOR IN THE SHAPING OF FRENCH POLICY AND TIMETABLE FOR NEW HEBRIDES INDEPENDENCE.

8. AS THOUGH TO EMPHASIZE THE FACT THAT HIS SUSPICIONS ARE DEEPER AND ARE NOT INSPIRED BY SPECIFIC VP ACTIONS HE VOLUNTEERED THAT HE COULD RADILY UNDERSTAND WHY THE VP WOULD REFUSE A BELATED AND RATHER HUMILIATING OFFER
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OF THREE LESS IMPORTANT MINISTERIAL POSTS IN THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

9. IN ORDER TO MAINIMIZE THE PERSISSTENT ALLEGATIONS THAT FRANCE IS STILL SEEKING TO MAINTAIN COLONIAL ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN NEW HEBRIDES HE TOLD VP THAT FRANCE WAS PREPARED TO TURN OVER TO THE GOVERNMENT ITS AHRES IN ALL PUBLIC COMPANIES ON THE ISLANDS AND WOULD INDEED HAVE MADE A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT TO THIS EFFECT IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE FACT THAT SUCH ACTION REQUIRES LEGISLATION BY THE FRENCH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE INTENDS TO INITIATE THE NECESSARY ACTION IMMEDIATELY UPON RETURN TO PARIS. FRANCE ANTICIPATES THAT IT WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE AID TO NEW HEBRIDES BUT HE MADE IT A POINT TO SAY THAT FRANCE WOULD LIKE TO DO THIS IN COOPERATION WITH OTHER WESTERN POWERS AND ESPCECIALLY THE U.S., U.K. AND AUSTRALIA. HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE U.S. WILL RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE ISLAND AFTER INDEPENDENCE ADDING THAT "PRESIDENT GISCARD WILL DEFINIATELY NOT WANT TO HAVE FRANCE CARRY ALONE THE BURDEON OF AID TO NEW HEBRIDES".

10. HE WENT INTO A LONG EXPLATION ABOUT THE NEED FOR THE AUSTRAIANS TO BE MORE INTERESTED IN WHAT IS HAPPENING IN NEW HEBRIDES BECAUSE IF HIS SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE VP WERE TO BE CONFIRMED AND UK AND FRANCE GRANTED NEW HEBRIDES ITS INDEPENDENCE UNDER CONSITIONS WHICH COULD TURN THE ISLAND INTO AMARXIST ONE PARTY REGIME, AUSTRALIA ALREADY HAS ITS HANDS FULL WITH PING AND IT IS UNLIKELY TO TAKE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE NEW HEBRIDES.

11. COMMENT: DIJOURD WAS PERSUASIVE IN XPOUNDING FRANCE'S NEW POLICY TO FACILIATE AND ACCELERATE THE PROCESS OF
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INDEPENDENCE FOR NEW HEBRIDES. HE SEEMED, HOWEVER, EQUALLY GENUINE IN HIS MISGIVINGS ABOUT EHE EVOLUTION OF THE VP AND IN HIS WONDERINGS ABOUT WHO IS REALLY IN CONTROL OF IT. IN ADDITION TO AUSTRALIE HE RECOGNIZED THAT NEW

CALEDONIA WILL BE MOST THREATENED SHOULD NEW HEBRIDES
BECOME AMARXIST REGIME. HENCE HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH
TACTICS AND SAFEGUARDS. HE SEEMED TO BE TO FIND WAYS TO STRENGTHEN THE

MODERATES NOW IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THOSE IN VP SO AS
TO ENHANCE THEIR POTENTIAL AS A COUNTERFORCE AGAINST THE
MARXIST ELEMENTS IN VP.

12. HIS PERSISTENCE IN TRYING TO GER THE AUSTRALIANS
INVOLVED IS NOTEWORTHY. HE MET AT HIS REQUEST WITH
AUSTRALIAN PRESBYTERIAN LEADERS IN PORT VILA AND FELT
THAT HE HAD SUCCEEDED IN CONVENCING THEM OF FRANCE'S
NEW POLICY BUT IS UNCERTAIN AS TO THEIR WILLINGNESS TO
RALLY BEHIND HIS IDEA OF A GREATER ROLE BY AUSTRAIA IN
NEW HEBRIDES.

13. HE WENT SO FAR IN HIS PREOCCUPATION WITH AUSTRALIA
AS TO ASK IF I WOULD MENTION THIS TO THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH
COMMISSIONER IN SUVA ADDING THAT HE WOULD BE READY TO MEET
WITH THE AUSTRALIANS ANY PLACE THEY WOULD LIKE BE IT
CANBERRA, SUVA OR ANY OTHER CITY. ALTOUGH I TOLD HIM
THAT THIS IS A MATTER THAT CAN BEST BE HANDLED THROUGH
THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY IN PARIS I WOLD APPRECIATE
THE DEPARTMENT'S ADVICE AS TO HOW FAR I SHOULD GO IN
SHARING THE FOREGOING WITH THE AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER
IN SUVA.

14. ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS DIJOURD URGED ME TO VISIT AND
STAY IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN FRENCH
TERRITORIES CITING SPECIFICALLY NEW CALNEDONIA, FRENCH
POLYNESIA, FUTUNA AND WALLIS AND, OF COURSE, NEW HEBRIDES,
I ASSURED HIM THAT THIS WAS NOT ONLY MY PERSONAL INTENTION
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BUT ALSO WASHINGTON'S INSTRUCTIONS.
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